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(54) Soft toys

(57) A teddy bear has conductive paws which when held cause the teddy to sing tunes or speak and its eyes to flash. The paws are connected, inside the teddy bear to a voltage source and a current sensor. On sensing a current, an electronic circuit including a micro-computer is powered up to produce the sounds and/or flash the lights. Instead, or as well, as singing, the teddy bear responds to simple spoken commands to flash its eyes or make a noise. Speech is detected by a series of tuned filters and compared with frequency/time patterns contained in an R.O.M.. An arrangement for playing tunes and flashing eyes is also described using discrete circuitry.

The drawing(s) originally filed was/were informal and the print here reproduced is taken from a later filed formal copy.

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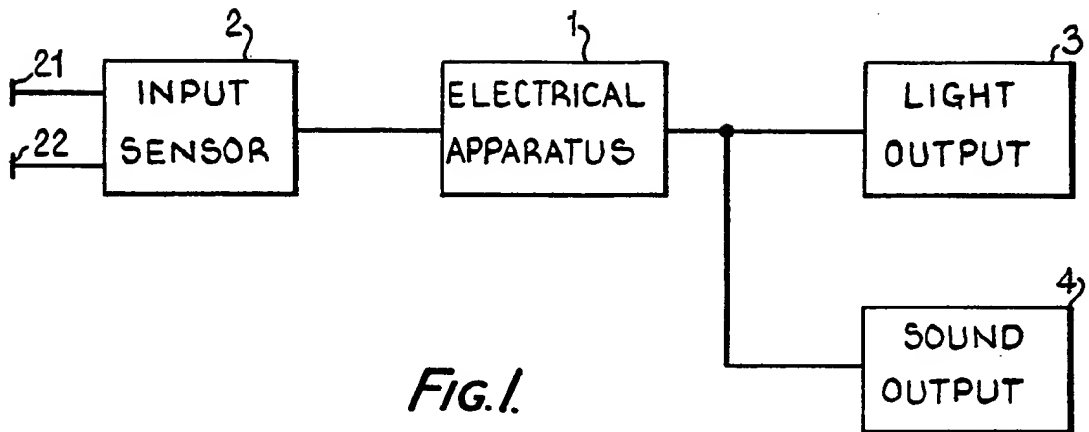


FIG. 1.

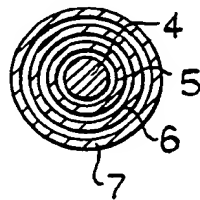


FIG. 2.

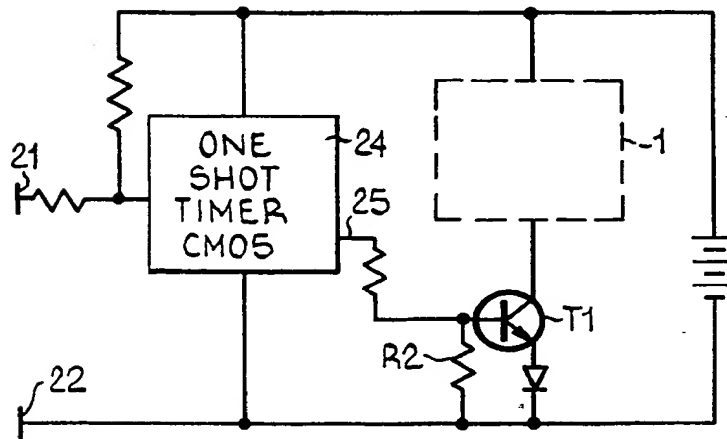


FIG. 3.

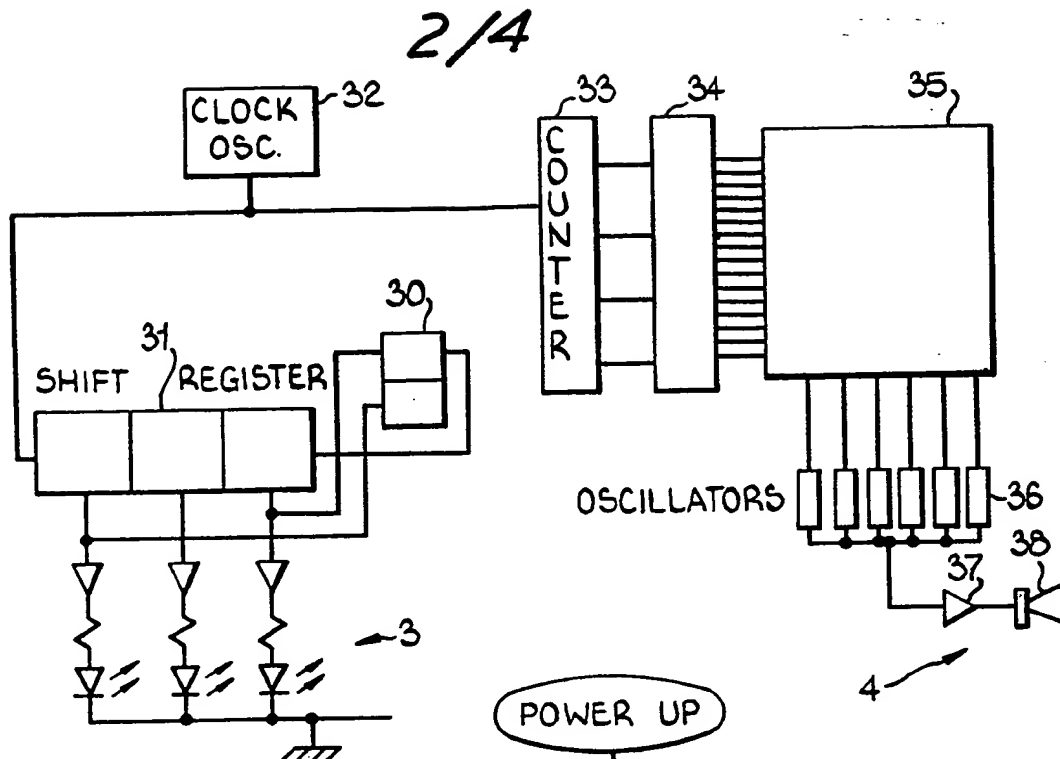


Fig. 4.

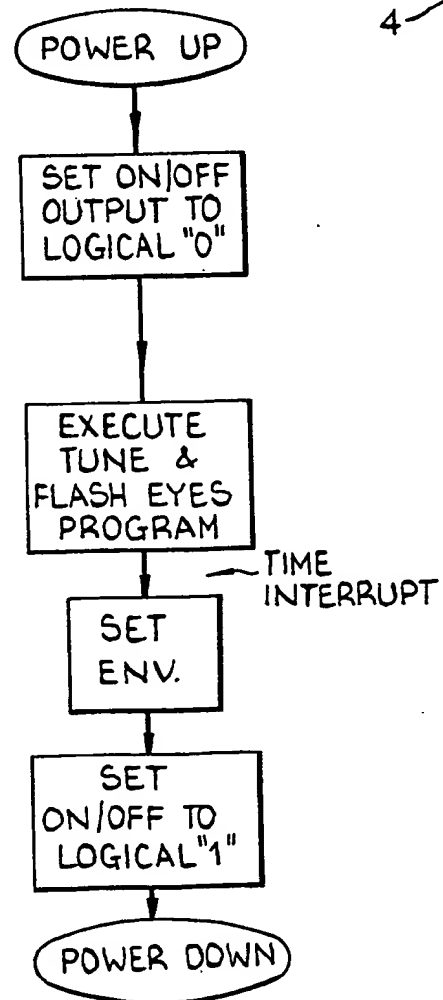


Fig. 6.

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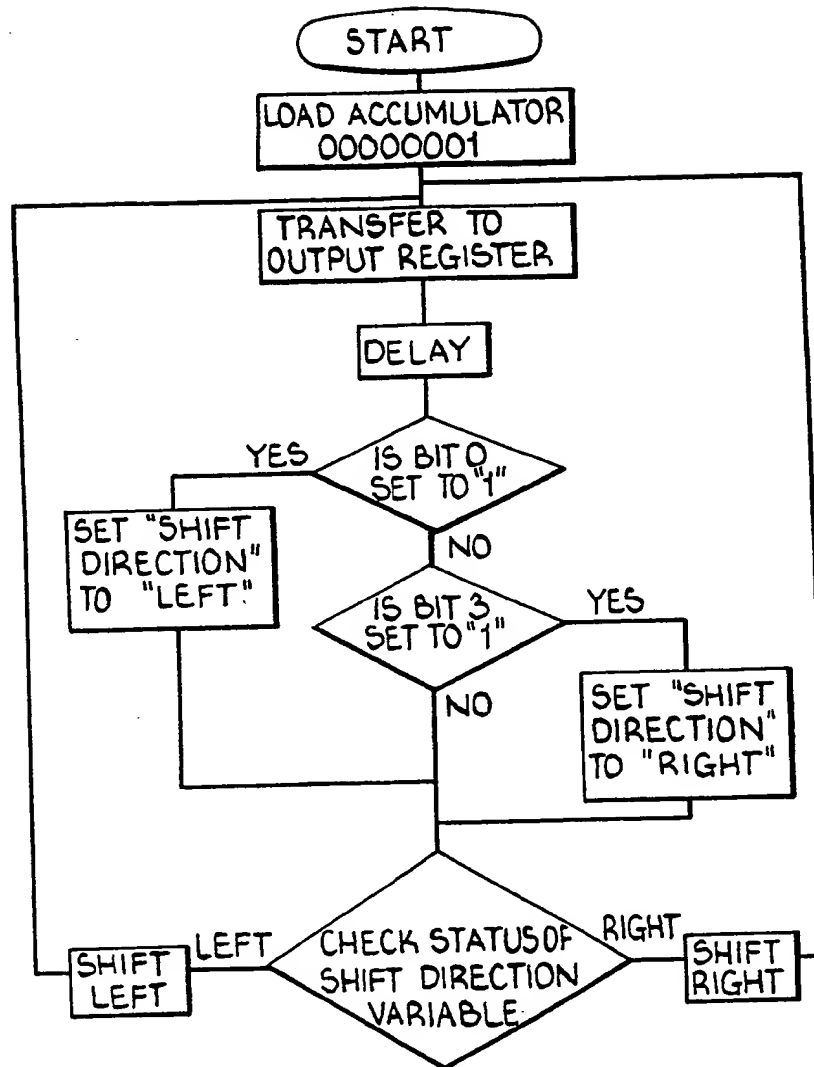


Fig. 7.

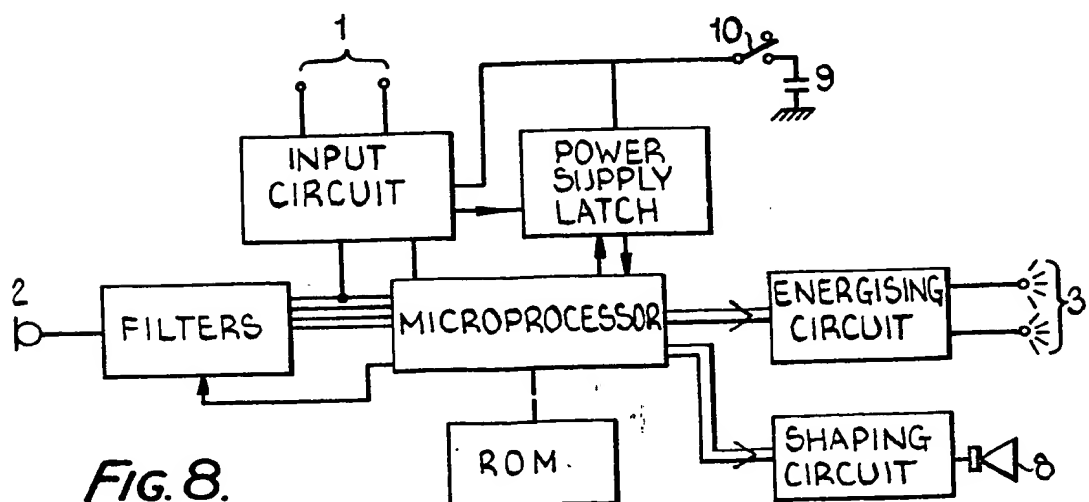
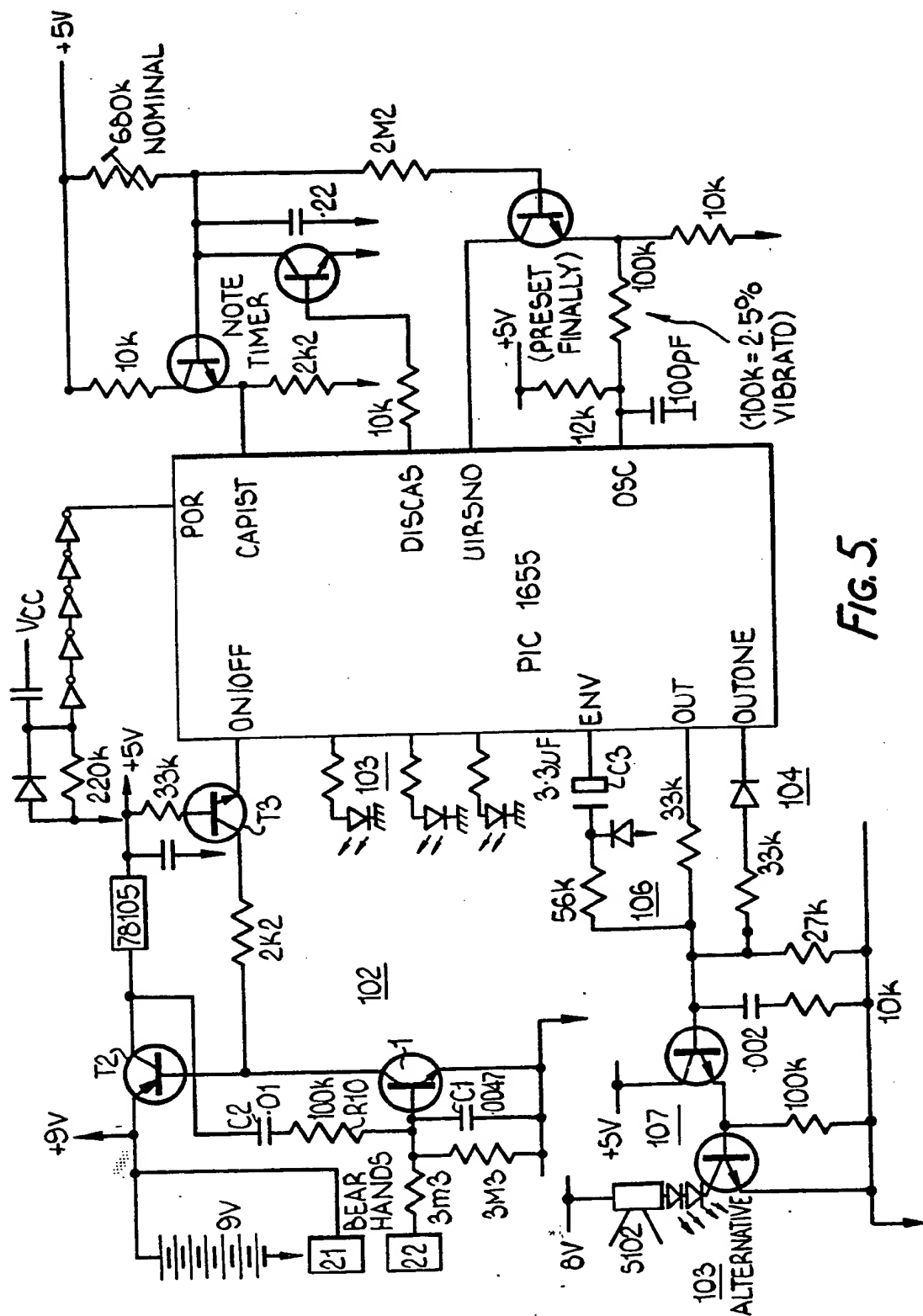


Fig. 8.



SPECIFICATION

Soft toys

- 5 The present invention relates to toys, in particular to teddy bears, dolls and other animal toys.

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a toy including electrical apparatus for producing an electrical signal when energised, soft flexible means sensitive to handling and connected to cause the electrical apparatus to become energised, and transducing means responsive to the electrical signal to produce a user perceivable stimulus.

- 15 According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a toy including a component representing an eye, the component having a plurality of light emitting devices, and the toy including means for sequentially selectively energizing and de-energizing the plurality of light emitting devices to produce the appearance of a changing pattern of light in the eye.

- 20 According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided an animal toy having two conductive means located on respective paws and including means for energizing the toy to produce a user perceivable stimulus on detection of an external electric current flowing between the conductive means.

- 30 Instead of, or in addition to, the soft flexible means sensitive to handling, the toy may include means sensitive to a sound, for example, a human speech pattern, connected to cause the electrical apparatus to become energised.

- 35 The soft, flexible means may be a sensor that senses a capacity change resulting from the handling, for example, a piece of conducting foil located underneath a layer of fabric connected to the gate of a field effect transistor. It may, alternatively, be a microswitch located below, and activated by pressure on, a soft, flexible pad located on the surface of the toy. A third possible form of the soft flexible means connected to cause the electrical apparatus to become energised may be a pair of conductive areas on the toy. When both areas are touched simultaneously, a small current (of the order of 10 μ A) is caused to flow through the handler's body, which current is sufficient to cause the electrical apparatus to become energised. Each conductive area may be a conductive layer, for example, a piece of metal foil located below a loosely woven or bonded piece of fabric which is such that the foil may be contacted by the hand of a handler through the interstices in the fabric. Alternatively, each conductive area may be a piece of conductive fabric having conductive filaments woven or bonded into it, or a piece of conductive carbon impregnated foam.

- The soft flexible means may be located anywhere on the toy but, where the toy is an animal toy, it is preferably located in the hands or front paws. There may be more than one soft flexible means (or pairs of such means) each for producing a different response from the toy.

- The electrical apparatus preferably includes a microprocessor which may have a separate read

only memory input connected to it. The microprocessor may include a sufficiently large memory to render a separate read only memory unnecessary.

- The transducing means responsive to the electrical signal from the electrical apparatus may produce a sound output, that is to say, it may comprise a loudspeaker, in which case the electrical apparatus should be capable of generating an electrical signal which would cause the loudspeaker to emit a noise resembling the cry of the animal represented by the toy and/or a tune or song associated with the animal. For example, if the toy is a teddy bear, the electrical apparatus may be programmed to generate signals corresponding to "The Teddy Bear's Picnic", and/or a growling noise, or, if the toy is a doll, the electrical apparatus may be programmed to generate signals corresponding to human speech or the noise of a child crying.

- Instead of, or in addition to, producing a sound output, the transducing means may produce a light output, preferably from the eyes of a soft toy. The transducing means producing a light output is preferably one or more light emitting diodes (LEDs). The arrangement of the electrical apparatus and the transducing means may be such that the intensity of light emitted is constant while the electrical apparatus is energised. Alternatively the arrangement may be such that the intensity emitted is varied either in a pseudorandom manner or in accordance with a specific program stored in the electrical apparatus. A particularly attractive effect is produced if an LED representing at least part of an eye is rapidly switched on and off thereby giving the eye a shimmering appearance. If the toy has a sound output, the eyes of the toy may be arranged to light up synchronously with the instantaneous loudness of the sound output.

- A particularly attractive form of eye for a soft toy has been found to be a central LED (representing the pupil) with one or more circles of light transmissive material concentric with it. The or each circle of light transmissive material is arranged to transmit light from an individual LED that may be lit up independently of the other LEDs, of that eye. The LEDs and/or the light transmissive material may be of a different colour. With such an arrangement an effect of the eye's iris opening and closing can be achieved. The light transmitters may be pieces of shaped plastics material.

- 115 Preferably, the arrangement is such that the sound or light output lasts for a predetermined period and, when it has finished, the circuits in the toy are powered down automatically to save battery power. The electrical apparatus may, however, be continuously re-energised by way of the soft flexible means or the sound sensitive means. The toy may also be provided with an on/off switch to provide relief for parents and to switch off the toy when storing it for a long time.

- 125 The toy may have a plurality of light and/or sound outputs. The arrangement may be that the various outputs are emitted in a pattern or in a pseudorandom order. Alternatively, the electrical apparatus may be arranged to be energised in response to one of two or more means sensitive to handling or to

sound, in which case, a different light and/or sound output could be emitted depending on which handling or sound sensitive means energises the electrical apparatus.

- 5 The animal may be used as a teaching and, for example, as an aid to teaching arithmetic. Thus, the arrangement may be such that, by way of the handling or the sound sensitive means, two signals corresponding to two numbers may be fed to the
- 10 electrical apparatus and an output corresponding to an arithmetical function of the two numbers may be given by way of the transducing means. For example, a number may be converted into a signal by patting a soft flexible means that number of times.
- 15 Alternatively, the sound sensitive means may be arranged to detect the sound of each of a plurality of numbers, for example, numbers from one to ten, when spoken and transmit a corresponding input to the electrical apparatus. The output may be given by
- 20 light emitting means flashing a number of times or by a sound emitting means giving a number of noise outputs or "pips". Alternatively, the electrical apparatus may be connected to a voice synthesizer in which case the animal could "speak" the number
- 25 corresponding to the arithmetical function of the two numbers.

There will now be described, by way of example only, embodiments of the invention with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

- 30 *Figure 1* shows a block diagram of the electrical circuitry of one embodiment of the invention, *Figure 2* shows an end view of a toy eye, *Figure 3* shows part of *Figure 1* in more detail, *Figure 4* shows part of *Figure 1* in more detail,
- 35 *Figure 5* shows detailed electrical circuitry of an embodiment using a micro-computer.

Figures 6 and 7 are flow charts of computer programs for an embodiment of the invention, and

- 40 *Figure 8* is a block diagram of the electrical circuitry of another embodiment.

Referring to *Figure 1* a soft toy includes electrical apparatus 1 connected to an input sensor 2 and an light sound output devices 3 and 4 respectively. The input sensor 2 includes a pair of soft flexible

45 conductive contacts (21, 22) situated at an near the surface of the toy. These contacts may be made of a carbon impregnated foam plastics material such as is sold under the tradename.

The input sensor 2 and its relationship with the

50 electrical apparatus 1 is shown in some detail in *Figure 3*.

Referring to *Figure 3* the contacts 20, 21 are connected respectively to the zero volts supply rail 22 and the trigger input of a CMOS 555 timer 24

55 connected as a monostable multivibrator. The contact 21 is also connected to a pull up resistor which may typically be 10M Ω . The output of the 555 is connected to a the base power transistor T1 the collect or circuit of which contain the electrical

60 apparatus 1.

In the quiescent state of the system the transistor T1 is held in a non-conductive state by base resistor R2. When a person hold both the contacts 20, 21 as small current flows in the resistor R1 which eases the

65 voltage on the trigger input 23 of the timer 24 to fall

and trigger the monostable 24 timing cycle. During the timing cycle a logical "1" appears on the output of the timer 25, which turns on the transistor T1 and energizes the electrical apparatus 1. Once the timing

70 cycle is complete the voltage at the output 25 falls to a logical "0" and the electrical apparatus is de-energized. As the monostable is CMOS construction the current consumption in the quiescent state is very low.

75 The light output device may be the eyes of a toy. One of these is shown in *Figure 2*. Each eye has a central LED 4 and three concentric rings of possibly coloured plastic light transmissive material 5, 6 and 7. Each ring 5, 6 and 7 is arranged to receive light

80 from a separate LED (not shown) located behind the eye, and to transmit it to the front of the eye shown in *Figure 2*. By selectively switching the LEDs the opening and closing of the iris of the eye can be simulated.

85 Referring to *Figure 4* the part of the electrical apparatus for driving the light output device 1 includes 3 stage shift register 31 clocked by an oscillation 32.

Each stage of the shift register is connected via a

90 driven amplifier to a respective one of the LED's of each ring of both of the eyes of the toy.

On "switch on" two of the stages of the shift register 31 are set to a logical "0" and one to a logical "1". Techniques for achieving this are well

95 known. A logical "1" causes its corresponding LED to be illuminated. Each clock pulse from the oscillation 32 causes the logical "1" to shift and hence the LEDs are illuminated in turn. The direction of shift is reversed automatically when the logical "1" reaches

100 either of the end stages of the register by the Flip-Flop 30. This produces the effect of opening and shutting of the iris of the eyes of the toy.

The oscillation 32 is also connected to a four bit counter 33 which may be for example an TTL SN 74

105 L93 integrated circuit. The outputs of the counter 33 fed a decoder 34 which is in term connected to the address lines of a read-only memory (ROM) 35. The sense lines of the ROM 35 are connected respectively to each of a plurality of tone generator circuits 36, each one of which is tuned to produce a signal

110 corresponding to different musical note. These signals are mixed and fed to a loudspeaker 38 via an audio amplifier 37.

In operation pulses from the oscillator 32 are

115 counted by the counter 33 and produce a parallel output representing the binary state of the count in the counter 33. In response to this the decoder produces a logical "1" sequentially on the 16 address lines of the ROM 35.

120 When logical "1" appears on an address line and a connection exists in the ROM between the address line and a sense line the sense line also assumes a logical "1" state and in turn energizes its respective tone generator. The number of musical notes possible is limited by the number of sense lines on the ROM note of duration defined by the frequency

125 produced by the oscillation 32. Notes of duration equal to integral multiples of the oscillation frequency can be produced by programming the ROM so

130 that an appropriate number consecutive addresses

operate the same tone generator.

Suitable circuit configurations for ROM's are well known. An example is a diode matrix where each connection is produced by a diode between the

5 address line and the sense line.

In arrangement described with respect to Figure 4 the LEDs of the light output device are sequenced at the same rate as the notes are produced by the sound output device (33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38). This need

10 not be so if for example a divider is inserted in the connection between the oscillator 32 and the counter 33 on the oscillation 32 and the shift register 31, on it the counter 33 and shift register 31 are driven by different oscillators.

15 Referring now to Figure 5 a second embodiment of the invention includes a single chip micro-computer PIC 1655. This device is manufactured and sold by General Instruments Corporation and is mask programmable. The circuitry shown in Figure 5 can

20 conveniently be split into an input sensor circuit and power supply switch, the micro-computer PIC 1655 light output circuits 103 and sound output circuits 104.

The input circuits 103 include contacts 121 and 122

25 which in the example in which the toy is a teddy bear are soft pads of conductive foam plastics material. The contact 122 is connected to the base of a transistor T1, the collector of T1 is connected to base of transistor T2 which is in series with the power

30 supply to the micro-computer PIC 1655 and the output circuits 104 and 103. Also connected to the base of T2 is a transistor T3 the emitter of which is connected to an output ON/OFF of the micro-computer PIC 1655 and the base of which is con-

35 nected to the supply rail.

In operation when both of the contacts 121 and 122 are touched by the user a small current flows between the contacts through the body of the user and the base-emitter circuit of T1. This causes T1 and

40 T2 to conduct, which "powers" up the rest of the circuitry via the series regulator T 8105. Spurious operation is prevented by a capacitor C1 and positive feedback via the capacitor C2 and resistor R10.

As soon as the micro-computer PIC 1655 is

45 powered up it commences execution of a program contained in an internal ROM. The first few instructions of the program cause a logical "0" to appear on the ON/OFF output and hence cause T3 to conduct. This causes a current to be drawn through the base

50 circuit of T2 which consequently keeps the collector circuit conductive even after the contacts 121, 122 have been released, and hence latches on the power supply.

Figure 6 shows a flow chart of the programme.

55 Once the power supply is latched on the micro-computer executes a tune program. The tune program used is similar to the program used in an integrated circuit tune generator chip sold by General Instruments Corporation under the number AY-

60 1310. Such tone programs are well known in the art, see for example Personal Computer World, Jan 1979, pages 21-23 and Byte Vol 4 No. 7 pp 34-51. Although written for different micro-computers these programs may readily be translated into

65 instructions suitable for the PIC 1655.

Flashing of the eyes of the toy is achieved by illuminating light emitting diodes connected to output terminals of the micro-computer. Many micro-computers for example the PIC 1655 have an output

70 register each individual bit of which appears on a respective output terminal. The register may periodically be loaded from the accumulator. Figure 7 shows a flow chart of a program which will sequentially energise 3 LED's connected to bits 2, 1,

75 and 0 of an output register. Another suitable micro-computer is the INS 8060 with an external ROM where the flag outputs of the status register can be used to drive the LED's. The micro-computer is also programmed to produce a "growl" sound at the end of its tune. This is done by outputting tones close in frequency on separate terminals (OUT, OUTONE) which beat to produce a combination of frequencies. In addition an exponential envelope is given to the tone by outputting a pulse on the envelope output

80 ENV via the capacitor C3 and clamping circuit 106. The tones are amplified by an audio amplifier 107 and fed to a loudspeaker LS.

Referring to Figure 8 the electrical circuitry of another embodiment has a microprocessor connected to a read only memory (ROM) in which is stored a program to cause the system to produce various light and sound outputs. The microprocessor may receive inputs in one of two ways. Firstly, it may receive an input by way of a pair of soft flexible contacts made of carbon impregnated foam plastics material situated near the surface of the toy. When a human holds both the contacts, an electrical circuit is completed and the current in an input circuit causes the microprocessor to actuate a power supply latch and the microprocessor then executes a predetermined program. Once energised, the microprocessor may receive inputs by way of a microphone 2, the output of which is fed into various filters. According to the sound entering the microphone, different outputs are fed from the filters to the microprocessor, which leads to a different signal being generated at the output of the microprocessor. The filters and microprocessor may be such as to produce the appropriate response when voice commands such as "SING" or "GROWL" are given to the toy by a child. The child will quickly learn which sounds the toy will respond to. Details of suitable speech recognition devices and techniques are known in the art and can be found for example in

115 "Give an ear to your computer" by Bill Georgiou of California State University which appeared in BYTE June 1978 Volume 3 Number 6 and the earlier references mentioned therein are incorporated herein by reference.

120 One pair of outputs of the microprocessor is fed to an energising circuit which control the eyes 3 of the toy, as shown in detail in Figure 2.

A further pair of outputs from the microprocessor are connected to a shaping circuit which controls a

125 loudspeaker 8 to produce a desired sound, tune, song, or other noise as previously described with respect to Figure 5.

The microprocessor is connected to a battery 9 by way of an on/off switch 10 and a power supply latch.

130 The power supply latch automatically powers down

the system after the predetermined light/sound output has finished as long as the microprocessor is not re-energised by way of the contacts 1.

- 15 In the block diagram shown in Figure 8, the filters and the power supply latch are shown as blocks separate from the microprocessor, though, of course, they may be incorporated in the microprocessor which then performs their functions.

The detail of the program required to produce the 10 desired output will depend on the type of microprocessor employed, but standard programming techniques for producing outputs simulating noise, musical notes and for producing rhythmic displays of light are available.

- 15 Instead of being fed into a microprocessor the outputs from the speech recognition filters could be fed into a clocked R.O.M. and compared with frequency/time patterns stored therein. Such frequency time patterns are described in the referenced

20 article in Volume 3 of BYTE Magazine.

Other useful references are
 BYTE June 1978 Vol 3 No. 6 pages 140, 141
 BYTE Vol 3 No. 6 pages 142-151
 BYTE Vol 3 No. 4 page 147

- 25 BYTE Vol 4 No. 4 pages 10-18
 BYTE Vol 4 No. 7 pages 34-51
 BYTE Vol 4 No. 10 pages 58-69

all of which are incorporated herein by reference.

30 CLAIMS:

1. A toy including electrical apparatus for producing an electrical signal when energised,
- 35 soft flexible means sensitive to handling and connected to cause the electrical apparatus to become energised, and transducing means responsive to the electrical signal to produce a user perceivable stimulus.
- 40 2. A toy according to claim 1 wherein the soft flexible means includes a conductive foam plastics material.
3. A toy according to claim 1 wherein the soft flexible means includes a conductive foil located in
- 45 soft non-conductive material.
4. A toy according to claim 1 wherein the soft flexible means includes conductive filaments in the material of the skin of the toy.
5. A toy according to any preceding claim where-
- 50 in the soft flexible means includes two flexible conductive elements so arranged that they are urged into contact during handling of the soft flexible means.
6. A toy according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein
- 55 the soft flexible means includes two conductive areas and each area is arranged so that on handling an electrical connection is formed to the body of the handler.
7. A toy according to any preceding claim where-
- 60 in the user perceivable stimulus includes light.
8. A toy according to any preceding claim wherein the transducing means includes a plurality of light emitting devices.
9. A toy according to claim 8 wherein the trans-
- 65 ducing means includes light transmissive elements coupled to respective ones of said plurality of light emitting devices and arranged to produce a pattern of light perceivable through a surface of the transducing means.
- 70 10. A toy according to claim 9 wherein the electrical apparatus includes means for sequentially energizing the light emitting devices to change the pattern of light.
11. A toy according to claim 9 or 10 wherein the
- 75 light transmissive elements are co-axial at the surface of the transducing means through which the pattern is perceivable.
12. A toy according to claim 6 including sensing means connected to each of the flexible conductive
- 80 elements for sensing an electric current flow between the elements and for energizing the electrical apparatus in response thereto.
13. A toy according to any preceding claim wherein the user perceivable stimulus includes
- 85 sound.
14. A toy according to claim 13 wherein the electrical apparatus includes means for causing the transducer means to produce a predetermined sequence of musical notes.
- 90 15. A toy according to claim 14 wherein the sequence is determined by the contents of a read-only memory.
16. A toy according to claim 1 wherein the electrical apparatus includes a microprocessor and a
- 95 read-only memory.
17. A toy according to claim 16 wherein the microprocessor and read-only memory are contained in a one-chip micro-computer.
18. A toy including a component representing an
- 100 eye, the component having a plurality of light emitting devices, and the toy including means for sequentially selectively energizing and de-energizing the plurality of light emitting devices to produce the appearance of a changing pattern of
- 105 light in the eye.
19. A toy according to claim 18 wherein the eye component includes a plurality of light transmissive elements each associated with a respective light emitting device and arranged to present a plurality
- 110 of rings at the surface of the eye and the means for energizing and de-energizing energises and de-energises adjacent rings in sequence.
20. An animal toy having two conductive means located on respective paws and including means for
- 115 energizing the toy to produce a user perceivable stimulus on detection of an external electric current flowing between the conductive means.
21. A toy according to claim 1 including timing means for de-energizing the electrical apparatus
- 120 after it has been energised for a predetermined time.
22. A toy according to claim 1 including sound sensitive means for altering the electrical signal in response to sound sensed by the sound sensitive means.
23. A toy according to claim 22 wherein the
- 125 sound sensitive means includes at least one frequency sensitive circuit for sensing within a predetermined frequency band and transmitting an indication to the electrical apparatus that that particular
- 130 sound has been sensed.

24. A toy according to claim 23 wherein the sound sensitive means includes a plurality of frequency sensitive circuits each for sensing within a different predetermined frequency, and recognition means for recognising particular sequences of frequencies.

25. A toy substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

10 New claims or amendments to claims filed on 9.6.80
Superseded claims –
New or amended claims:-

26. A toy including
15 electrical apparatus for producing an electrical signal when energised,
an electrical contact of a soft and flexible electrically conductive material connected to the electrical apparatus and arranged so that a current flow
20 through the contact causes the electrical apparatus to become energised, and
transducing means responsive to the electrical signal to produce a user perceivable stimulus.

27. A toy according to any one of claims 2 to 17
25 and 21 to 24 wherein the soft flexible means sensitive to handling and connected to cause the electrical apparatus to become energised is an electrical contact of a soft and flexible electrically conductive material and arranged so that a current
30 flow through the contact causes the electrical apparatus to become energised.

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